

Acts
“Jesus” The Sequel
III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”

Chp. 13-14 Being sent on the way (1st trip)

14:6-28

“The tale of three cities part b”

I.) Intro.

II.) Vs. 6-20 Lystra: Jesus rocks, Paul’s stoned

III.) Vs. 21-28 Derby: Strengthened souls

I.) Intro.

In Matt. 28 we read that we are to. “Go ... and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” But just how do we do this? In chapter 14 we saw six important things to remember when we share with others about Jesus, today we will learn of six more.

II.) Vs. 6-20 Lystra: Jesus rocks, Paul’s stoned

Vs. 6 The team moved to the second of there three cites, Lystra, which was about 20 miles southwest from Iconium, but it was worlds apart culturally, being even more backwoods then Iconium. Caesar had turned it into a Roman colony and brought in some army vets to fortify it. The population base was mainly uneducated who came from a small tribe that spoke its own language, (verse 11). Evidently there weren’t even 10 Jewish men in the city as they didn’t have a synagogue as it took only 10 men to form one.

According Acts 16:1 and 2 Tim. 1:5 there were some Jews there as this was the home of young man named Timothy. You will remember Timothy from the two letters

that Paul writes calling him his “*son in the faith*”. Apparently his father was Greek but his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois were Jewish believers.

Vs. 7, 15-17 Let’s skip a head a moment and look first at Paul’s message being that this was the first city Paul and Barnabas went into that didn’t have a synagogue they had to alter what they normally did. **First** they had to change the location (*this probably happened at the town square*). **Second**, seeing that the crowd didn’t have many Jewish listeners Paul preached the gospel (as verse 7 indicates) to Gentiles instead Jewish seeing that they wouldn’t understand all the O.T. references. We are given a sample of what he said in verses 15-17.

1. Vs. 15 “*the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them*”. He spoke to them about God as a single living creator. In Greek Mythology there were many gods and they were all fighting with each other, so they made statues to them and gave them each special holidays. So Paul says, “*Hey, look at creation, look at the order and harmony in it. There’s not many god’s there is one God who created everything.*”
2. Vs. 17 “*He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.*” His second point is that since there is one God who did this it doesn’t make since that he should just create it and not be interested in it. God is not dead He is alive and to show us that He is alive and interested in His creation look at the good that he does:
 - a. *gave us rain from heaven*: Simply put God is faithful no matter who you are.

- b. *and fruitful seasons:* God has given people times of great blessing as individuals. Thus Paul says that God had been, “*filling our hearts with food and gladness.*”
- c. Vs. 15 “*should turn from these useless things to the living God ... who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.*”
Paul’s point is that God has cut you some slack by given you free will but it’s time to make some changes.

That was Paul’s message to those who did not know the scriptures. Which leads me to the The **seventh point** on how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **MINISTER FROM WHERE PEOPLE ARE:** Paul did not start quoting the O.T. prophets about Jesus’ first coming because it would have meant nothing to them. Paul went with what there Greek culture was filled with, gods and then turned that around to a lesson of God’s grace towards them. There was plenty of theology in his message but it was easy for them to understand which made it easy for folks to respond.

Vs. 8-10 Luke describes this man’s condition as having three strikes against him in verse 8 and it serves as a metaphor for all of humanity apart from Jesus:

- a. **Without strength in his feet:** In the Greek it literally means that it was medically impossible for this man to walk. His feet did not work! **NO ENERGY**
- b. **A cripple from his mother’s womb:** Luke says that it was a genetic defect, or if you will he was born that way! **NO EXPERIENCE**
- c. **Who had never walked:** Lastly he had no practice in walking. In other words he did not know what walking would be like. **NO EDUCATION**

Any one of these three statements would have made him lame but all of them together made it irreversibly impossible to do so. According to Luke's description this man as well as mankind is hopelessly and helplessly a cripple. That's what Luke the doctor wants us to see concerning this miracle.

In verse 9 according to the Greek this man had a **habit** of listening to Paul preach the message we just outlined above. And this day that Paul noticed him as he listened to the message of hope and help to those who had no hope or help. It does not matter your education, environment, or self-effort the effects of sin will eventually be seen in our own lives as well. It is not just evil people that get cancer or only bank robbers that get killed in accidents. You can be the nicest person who has ever lived and have the effects of sin upon you. Further more you can not reverse the effects of sin by taking out the trash when you're not told to!

Picture this hopeless and helpless man listening to Paul's words about a God who is not made out of marble but is living. "*Could it be true?*" "*Can this God change me and reverse that which apart from Him is irreversible?*" Paul says, "Stand up strait on your feet", and he leaped and walked!

Wow, that's my testimony too. My life did not function as God had designed it to and I had that condition since birth. The moment I responded in obedience to the word of Grace I stood up straight, leaped and began walking as God had designed.

Vs. 11-14 The response of the multitudes is a bit puzzling if you didn't know the culture. About 50 years earlier a poet named Ovid had wrote about several local legends about the Greek gods Zeus and Mercury.

Barnabas they thought was Zeus, he was the god of the sky and his weapon was a thunderbolt. According to the myths he was the leader of all the other so-called gods and as far as mortals were concerned he looked out for travelers and punished those who broke oaths. Hermes, or Mercury was Zeus' son, they thought was Paul. Mercury was the messenger of the gods he is depicted wearing a cap with little wings on it. In Greek mythology it is Mercury that escorts the souls of the dead to the underworld and he was also the patron of literature. It is easy to see how they listened to Paul speak intelligently about life after death and equated him with their superstition. Ovid 50 years earlier had written a story about Zeus and Mercury when they come down to Lystra disguised as mortals. They sought hospitality from the towns' people but none was given them except for an old couple. So they destroyed the city except for the old couple who they made keepers of their temple until they died and then they turned them to trees to guard it. They have found stones in Lystra which speak of the worship of these two gods.

Though this miracle was greatly beneficial to the lame man, it had an adverse effect on the ministry in Lystra as it attracted attention but it produced wrong results. These people, speaking in their own language are about ready to make an offering to Paul and Barnabas until they figure it out and put a stop to it.

Now this leads me to **eighth point** on how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **DON'T TOUCH GODS GLORY**: How tempting this would have been for Paul and Barnabas to accept the sacrifice because of the approval of the people and later try to witness them.

Instead of accepting the praise of men they show their disdain for it by tearing their clothes a Jewish sign of grief. Then they explained that the reason for their being there and the message was to turn from such “vain” things. The word vain appears 6 times in the N.T. and it means empty or useless things. Paul wanted them to know that you could not just add Jesus to the pantheon of idols they were already worshipping.

Vs. 18-19 Hear is a clear example at how fickle people can be as one minute they are ready to worship Paul as a god the next minute they are ready to kill him. I mean even after Paul rebuked them for their idolatry they still had a desire to worship them.

In verse 19 we see what changed their opinions were a group that came as far away as 120 miles to upset the ministry. ***What caused the people to turn so quickly from worship to rocks? It was that they were into the instrument instead of listening to the music.*** They take Paul out of the city and attempt to execute him Jewish style, by stoning him. It appears that they thought that they had succeeded as they are taking his lifeless body out of town but after they leave him for dead the body of Christ gather around him and Paul rises up and goes back into the city.

Now this leads me to **ninth point** on how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING:** Neither success nor failure changed Paul’s message about Jesus. He proclaimed Jesus and healed a lame man and they want to worship him. People travel 120 miles to change their fickle minds and they try to kill and the next day he goes back into the city. Paul was not focused on the outcome but rather on Jesus.

III.) Vs. 21-28 Derby: Strengthened souls

Vs. 21a Luke sums up the ministry described here in Derby very briefly; “*they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples.*” Derby was about 60 miles southeast of Lystra and was a frontier town. In Acts 20:4 we are told that Gaius who was one of Paul’s travel companions was from this little frontier town where Paul travels the day after being stoned and left for dead.

Timothy a leader in the early church comes from the little town of Lystra; Gaius a leader in the Church comes from a little town of Derby. **It appears to me that many times God rises up some great leaders from obscure ministries!**

Vs. 21b Twice in this verse we see the word “*disciple*”, once when it refers to Paul’s preaching in Derby, and once when it refers to his “*strengthening the souls*” of those believers in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.

Now this leads me to **tenth point** on how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **MAKE DISCIPLES AND NOT JUST DECISIONS:** Over and over again in Paul’s ministry you will see that Paul was concerned with the believers walk with God not just their talk. This lead him back into the cities that had expelled him, to **make sure that those who had made a profession of faith new how to live the new life they had just entered into.**

We see **six different things that Paul and Barnabas did with these disciples to help them with their WALK with Jesus:**

1. Vs. 22 **Strengthened:** The word here has the same root word as the word *epistle*, which means a word sent. They **taught them the Word of God which caused them to become more firm in their faith.**

2. Vs. 22 **Exhorted**: Here the word that is also used for the Holy Spirit's to come along side. Paul and Barnabas came alongside to disciple or demonstrate how to walk with Jesus.
3. Vs. 22 **Continue in the faith**: They modeled a consistent walk in the faith by showing them that a relationship with Jesus was a marathon and not a sprint.
4. Vs. 22 **Endurance**: "*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*" They told them that life in Christ was not easy and that it was a life of endurance. He did not want them to get disillusioned when trouble and persecutions came their way, but rather to expect it and to ride them to the glory of God.
5. Vs. 23 **Appointed elders**: They organized them so that they would continue to grow in their walk with Jesus long after Paul and Barnabas had left. All those in these Church's would have been new believers but still there need to establish a structure that would accommodate growth.
6. Vs. 23 **Prayed fasted and commended them to the Lord**: They showed them by their actions that to continue to walk with Jesus would require total dependence upon Him.

Vs. 24-25 Notice that they spoke the Word in Perga before they returned home. They had passed this town by as they came into Galatia as the timing was not right, but on the way back they make sure that they share the truth to those folks as well.

Now this leads me to **eleventh point** on how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **DON'T PASS BY THE OPORTUNITIES GOD GIVES YOU:** They did not feel led to share with them at first because of Paul's health but when given the opportunity again they preached the Word there as well.

Vs 26-28 Finally they come back to Antioch where they had been sent out and gather all of the folks to share all the God had done with them. They did not share what they had done for God but rather what God had done for them in reaching the Gentiles. They stayed there a long time with the believer's which leads me to my **twelfth point** on how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO GO AND REACH THE WORLD:** Part of Paul's and Barnabas ministry was to come back to the place where God had sent them out to share all that He had done through them.

So let me again go over those **12 points on how to be effective in reaching the world for Jesus** as learned in Acts 14:

- **BE LED BY THE SPIRIT**
- **START WITH WHAT YOU KNOW**
- **THE MESSAGE MUST BRING OUT A RESPONSE**
- **BE CONSISTANT NO MATTER WHAT OTHERS SAY**
- **DON'T TRY TO SENSATIONALIZE THE TRUTH**
- **NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF YOUR JOB**
- **MINISTER FROM WHERE PEOPLE ARE**
- **DON'T TOUCH GODS GLORY**
- **KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING**
- **MAKE DISCIPLES AND NOT JUST DECISIONS**
- **DON'T PASS BY THE OPORTUNITIES GOD GIVES YOU**
- **ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO GO AND REACH THE WORLD**